

REMARKS

Claims 19-20 and 37 were examined in the Final Office Action mailed October 31, 2007, with claims 21-36 standing withdrawn pursuant to Election/Restriction Requirement.

The Applicants are requesting entry of amendments to claim 19 to more specifically recite the location and rotation of the rotating body which applies the cleaning agent to the screen stencil, in order to place claim 19 into condition for allowance. Conforming amendments to cancel claim 20 and similarly amend claim 37, and to address the pending claim objection in the manner of the Examiner's helpful suggestion, are also requested.

As amended, claim 19 would recite that: "before performing the intermediate printing, the bottom of the screen stencil is wetted with a cleaning agent by a rotating cylinder or brush that is immersed in cleaning agent and brought in contact with the bottom of the screen stencil, the rotating cylinder or brush being mounted to be raised or lowered and arranged across a direction of movement of the intermediate printing device," and "the rotating cylinder or brush rotates without slippage along the bottom of the screen stencil."

The Applicants respectfully submit that as amended, claims 19 and 37 would be patentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over the combination of Japanese Patent Publication No. 2002-254608 A ("Goto") and Japanese Patent Publication No. 11-198354 ("Yamada"). As noted in the pending Final Office Action, Goto's intermediate printing on a stencil-cleaning sheet does not disclose or suggest any aspect of the present invention's use of a cleaning agent. The Yamada reference

teaches an approach to cleaning which is substantially different as compared to the invention recited in claims 19 and 37, and in fact would be undesirable to use in the present invention.

As a first matter, there is no disclosure of how the Yamada apparatus engages the bottom side of its screen 2, other than a reference to the screen 2 being brought down to the plane at which print media is located when printing is underway (indeed, the Yamada rotating cylinder 48 is mounted on the trolley 22, and there is no suggestion of raising or lowering the cylinder 48). Yamada machine English translation at ¶ [0023] (“the substrate holder 18 is descending to the location which substrate 16’ carries and lays ...”). Yamada therefore does not teach or suggest the amended claims’ “rotating cylinder or brush being mounted to be raised or lowered.”

As a separate matter, while Yamada teaches cleaning of a screen, it does so in a markedly different manner than the present invention. Where the present invention teaches wetting of the screen by using a roller in a particular manner (without slippage, as discussed further below) followed by direct contact with an intermediate sheet (*i.e.*, a sheet dedicated to the cleaning function, not a production media sheet), Yamada teaches rotation of the rotating cylinder 48 in a direction directly *counter* to the direction of motion of the screen (*i.e.*, ramming the fibers of the roller laterally into the screen as the screen passes by in the opposite direction), followed by dragging of a squeegee blade 32 across the bottom of the screen to remove excess “printing paste 14.” Yamada machine English translation at ¶¶ [0025]-[0027]. This approach is illustrated in Yamada

Fig. 4, wherein the arrows thereon show that the carriage on which the cylinder 48 is mounted is moving to the left, while the cylinder 48 is rotating counter-clockwise, followed by blade 32 driving excess "printing paste 14" toward the left, as well as down away from the blade.

As a result of the Yamada approach to cleaning, the material being cleaned from the screen has a propensity to be pushed up into the pores of the screen, hampering cleaning efforts. In contrast, the invention of claims 19 and 37 avoids these problems by avoiding slippage between the roller and the screen, and by "dabbing" the screen with the intermediate sheet from directly below, rather than laterally dragging across the bottom of the screen. As a result, the claim 19/claim 37 invention avoids forcing the contaminating printing material up into the pores of the screen, thereby enhancing cleaning performance.

In view of the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully submit that Yamada does not disclose or suggest all of the features of the method for cleaning a silk screen stencil recited in claims 19 and 37, and accordingly no combination of Goto and Yamada teaches or suggests the subject matter of these claims. The Applicants therefore respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the pending § 103(a) rejections.

CONCLUSION

The Applicants respectfully request entry of the foregoing requested amendments to place claims 19 and 37 into condition for allowance, and issuance of a Notice of Allowance for these claims.


If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in

general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #100412.56347US).

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey D. Sanok", written over a horizontal line.

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